

EXCHANGE RATES		
	YESTERDAY	PREVIOUS
YEN	124.885	124.96
PESO	53.57	53.4
HK \$	7.7998	7.7996
BAHT	45.765	45.698
RUPEE	47.135	47.14
WON	1298.1	1301.25

In U.S. dollar terms
Source: Associated Press

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CNMI ranked third among US states and territories whose number of General Education Development test-takers surged in 2000, a government report revealed. Education officials attribute the increase to the new GED test series which will replace the current one in January 2002. **3**

THE ECONOMY

No Vacancy

Japan's jobless rate remained at a record high 4.9 percent in June, unchanged from the previous month, but underscoring severe employment conditions as the economy deteriorates. The number of jobless rose for the third straight month to 3.38 million, up 170,000 from May. **11**

ASIA

Homebound

A US-linked Chinese scholar freed on medical parole will likely leave for the United States this week. Qin Guangguang, paroled by Beijing last week following pressure from Washington, went first to visit his sick mother in the southwestern province of Sichuan because he fears China will not allow him back once he leaves. **15**

THE NATION

To A Better FBI

FBI Director-designate Robert Mueller vowed Monday to move forcefully to fix problems at the agency, then clashed with a leading Republican over how much information he would give an increasingly vigilant Congress. **16**

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Can't Please 'em All

European leaders and the continent's press may get upset at President Bush's go-it-alone attitude, but the hard reality is Europe has no choice but to cut the best deals it can with its most powerful ally. **18**



Ever heard of the story about a family who never learned how to live in both "good and bad times"? A Saina!

Missing Chinese feared dead

• Authorities call off rescue operations

By JOHN RAVELO
Staff Reporter

Authorities decided to call off the rescue operations to locate the three Chinese nationals who remain missing after their boat capsized off Tinian Sunday, raising fears that the victims may already be dead.

The decision came as government operatives strongly suspect that the Chinese nationals are part of human smuggling operations even if the Department of Labor and Immigration's head office on Saipan did not confirm the aliens' immigration status in the CNMI.

"Right now, we're still zero. We might call it off this evening," Emergency Management Office Director

Gregorio DeLeon Guerrero said by telephone yesterday afternoon. "We're going to presume that they're missing at sea."

The missing Chinese were part of a group of six who were aboard the ill-fated vessel.

But the EMO, through its Operations Section, did not confirm if there was any change to the plan to call off operations last night when contacted by the Tribune at about past 7 p.m.

"Maybe, they made it to land. Maybe, they're hiding," remarked Guerrero, implying that the missing aliens, though they may have survived the sea tragedy, have been illegally staying in the CNMI.

He said the three survivors that include two women are in the custody of Tinian's immigration agents, but they were staying at the Department of Public Safety's headquarters on the island.

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FAREWELL TO SUMMER

Youth campers Lia Rangamar and Joshua Elameto wave goodbye to the camera during the conclusion of the Division of Youth Services Summer Camp last week.

Higher PSS funding hangs on thin thread

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Staff Reporter

With the killer amendments attached to it by the Senate, the initiative that would have increased the budget of the Public School System by 10 percent has virtually zero chances now of being passed into law.

This developed after House Speaker Benigno R. Fitial said that the House of Representatives has no plans of touching House Legislative Initiative 12-001 due to the defective amendments made on the initiative.

"We will not touch it. We will never touch that bill as it was amended by the

Senate because, in the first place, those amendments are nonsensical," Fitial stressed.



Fitial

"I care about education but I will not support a bill that would maim the government and effectively destroy education," he added.

The initiative, as offered by Rep. Thomas B. Pangelinan and passed by the Lower Chamber, aimed to amend the Commonwealth Constitution by increasing the PSS' mandatory fund-

ing from the present 15 percent to 25 percent of the General Fund.



Pangelinan

to the PSS, another 30 percent to the Department of Public Health and another 30 percent to the Department of

However, during deliberations on the measure at the Senate, Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero moved to amend the initiative by allocating 30 percent of the General Fund

Health expert warns vs. airborne diseases

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
Staff Reporter

Health experts are bracing for a wave of airborne diseases expected to hit the islands this year, known to prey on both adults and children.

Two months into the flu season, the health department is keeping a close eye on two common illnesses anticipated to affect island residents, namely; Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus.

"Influenza is probably brought over

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NMI's GED test-takers soar 22%

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
Staff Reporter

CNMI ranked third among US states and territories whose number of General Education Development test-takers surged in 2000, a government report revealed.

Education officials attribute the increase to the new GED test series which will replace the current one in January 2002.

The Chronicle of Higher Education quoted a GED Testing Services report that revealed significant increases in the number of GED test examinees in eight states and US territories.

Marshall Islands topped the list with a 36.3 percent increase over 1999 figures while the Virgin Islands came in second with a 35.7 percent increase.

An increase of 22.2 percent in 2000 was recorded separately for the Northern Marianas and North Dakota. Ohio and Kentucky also saw an average 13 percent increase in GED test-takers last year, followed by Iowa and Louisiana at 10 percent each increase.

In the CNMI, more students are running against time to complete five of the GED test series as the Northern Marianas College Adult Basic Education program readies to throw out the current set of exams.

Acting Adult Basic Education Director Phil Swett warned that old scores earned from the present test series will not be mixed with test results of the new set of GED exams.

Swett said the students who have not yet completed and passed all five tests will have to

re-take the exam before the new tests are implemented early next year. Ongoing students are encouraged to complete their GED not later than September 30, 2001.

Otherwise, prospective test-takers are advised to wait until the new tests come out in January.

The revised GED tests were originally scheduled to take effect last January. The test, equivalent to applying for a high school diploma, is being changed for the first time in ten years.

Swett said CNMI similarly experienced a surge in GED test-takers when the testing services moved to revise the average passing score.

"It is possible that the number of test-takers will be up this year, although it's still hard to tell," said Swett.

As part of its CNMI-wide efforts to encourage ongoing students to complete the GED requirements, NMC has increased its testing dates on Saipan, Rota and Tinian.

Adults working on the completion of their General Education Diploma are reminded they only have a few months left to pass the tests.

Any GED candidate who has not successfully completed the GED Tests by the deadline set must start again with the 2002 Series GED Tests to qualify for a diploma.

"The obsolete scores cannot be 'converted' to scores on the new tests," warned the GED Testing Services in Washington.

Modified general education development tests effective January 2002 will incorporate

the most up-to-date, widely used curriculum standards and standardized assessment practices to include real life "authentic" materials in different areas of disciplines.

GED Testing Service Executive Director Joan Auchter said the types of test questions will mirror not only tasks students are being asked to perform in the kindergarten through 12th grade environment.

Auchter underscored that the assessment is also tailored to match the ways adults must function as effective workers, parents, students, and citizens.

Fresh test materials will include editorial cartoons, graphs of economic data, and business memoranda cut across traditional classroom subject areas that will require GED candidates to process information in multi-

ple disciplines simultaneously. Test content and design specialists also warned that the 2002 series GED tests will introduce the use of a calculator on its mathematics portion.

Beginning in January 2002, GED candidates will be issued a Casio fx-260 solar calculator during the math test.

But examinees will also be required to demonstrate their mathematical abilities without aid from the counting devices.

The new GED Tests will continue to measure the major and lasting outcomes of a four-year high school course of study in English language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics.

Graduating high school seniors will continue to set the benchmark by which passing scores are set.



HOME SWEET HOME

The Koblerville housing project is expected to be completed soon. Early this year, the Legislature approved additional funding for the project, which will fund the construction of other facilities like roads and sewer. The Commonwealth Development Authority, through the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, is spearheading the project.

EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

Hyatt exec to represent hoteliers in labor study

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands has named Josephine Mesta as its representative to a statutory body tasked to do a comprehensive study on the CNMI's manpower needs relative to the law that limits nonresident workers to a three-year stay in the islands.

HANMI President Ronald Sablan sent Mesta's nomination to the so-called PL. 11-69 Task Force, last month to Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio. By law, the governor appoints members to the 11-seat task force who shall then serve a term that expires no later than May 5, 2005.

Mesta is currently Human Resources Director for Hyatt Regency Hotel Saipan. She has been actively involved with the CNMI Chapter of the Society of Human Resources Management.

In nominating Mesta, Sablan said: "Your vast experience in Human Resources makes you an excellent choice to represent the Association in this very

important government body."

Public Law 11-69 requires non-resident workers to leave the CNMI upon completion of three consecutive years of employment. Such worker is then barred for six months from returning to the islands.

A recently enacted law, Public Law 12-59, suspends the implementation of the three-year limit law until March 2005 and provides for the creation of the task force that will determine whether the stay limit restriction should be repealed or reinstated.

The scope of the task force's study is relative to the following:

- The CNMI's need for non-resident workers;
- The effectiveness of programs and opportunities for resident workers to replace non-resident workers in the private sector work force;
- Competitive employment in the public sector; and
- Assessment of criteria on the basis of industry, occupa-

tional categories, professional, technical, managerial, supervisory and line positions.

Under the law, the task force shall report its final findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature as to whether PL. 11-69 should be amended or repealed.

Aside from HANMI, other sectors or organizations allowed one member each in the task force are the Chamber of Commerce, the Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association, the construction industry, small businesses, the CNMI Indigenous Entrepreneurs Association, and the Carolinian community.

Also, one representative each from the first senatorial district and the second senatorial district gets to be appointed by the governor. Lastly, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate shall appoint one member each of their respective houses of Legislature to the task force.

Senate fast-tracks passage of power transfer measure

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Staff Reporter

With an August 5 deadline snapping at their heels, Senate lawmakers are scrambling to iron out the kinks in a legislative initiative that would abolish legislative delegations and empower municipal councils in their stead.

Sen. Joaquin G. Adriano, chairman of the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations, said the Senate will try to pass House Legislative Initiative 12-004 by Wednesday or Thursday this week to meet the August 5 deadline.

"We discussed that this morning with committee chairman Sen. Jose de la Cruz. We know that the initiative is due this week for submission to the Board of Elections," Adriano said.

The Senate has to pass the initiative by August 5 for it to

be included in the measures that would be placed in a referendum during the November 3 elections.

The measure, which intends to amend Article II Section 6 and Article VI of the CNMI Constitution, is an enabling bill that would give municipal councils the authority to introduce and approve local measures—a power currently held by legislative delegations.

Adriano, however, said that he wants to introduce some changes to the initiative, such as increasing the terms of office of municipal council members from three to four years, issues on compensation, and the delegation of local laws.

"I want to amend that portion that calls for three municipal council members. I would like to increase that by two, so it should be five, especially in Rota and Tinian. This is because Tinian has a different style

of appropriation in terms of the gambling initiative that we have. Instead of just three people who would decide that, I want to see that we have five people deciding that," Adriano said.

At the same time, he said he would also push for an amendment that would require the municipal council to work full-time. The present version states that the council will only work part-time.

"They [councils] are taking away the power of the local delegation and for them to be on a part-time basis to oversee the local laws that need to be implemented in their respective senatorial district is not enough," Adriano pointed out.

Consistent with this, he is pushing for a \$35,000-per-annum compensation for each council members. At the moment, municipal council members are paid \$25 per meeting.

Partnership seen to revive Tinian's tourism industry

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
Staff Reporter

The Tinian Gaming Promotion, an agency under the mayor's office, is proposing a partnership with the Marianas Visitors Authority's branch on Tinian to maximize the use of its resources in the marketing of the island's casino gaming industry.

In a letter to MVA Managing Director Perry Tenorio, Tinian Gaming Promotion Executive Director Ramon M. Dela Cruz said a partnership between the two offices on Tinian will be beneficial to both agencies.

"Our approach will not be a duplication of your efforts but [a partnership would] complement our efforts in the maintenance of tourist sites on a regular basis," said Dela Cruz.

He said MVA's field office on Tinian has limited person-

nel, adding that it would be unrealistic to expect them to regularly clean and maintain various tourist sites on the island.

"The agency was recently created to promote the gaming industry and to assist in the development and maintenance of tourist sites. We are open to new sites and if funds are made available through local revenues, construct tourist facilities and conduct intensive island-wide beautification," he added.

He stressed that the merger will ensure the effective monitoring and maintenance of the island's tourists sites. In addition, the two offices will be able to coordinate beautification projects, as well as the creation of a one-stop visitors' information center.

"With your favorable action, the MVA staff will be provided office space at the center and

we can utilize your present office as storage of maintenance equipment and nursery station for both MVA and the Gaming Promotion," said Dela Cruz.

He is hopeful that the MVA will be able to work on the details of the said proposal immediately. He also said that Tenorio's swift action on the proposed partnership would ensure better projects that will benefit Tinian and the rest of the Northern Marianas.

"Your support and understanding will greatly increase our opportunity to enhance the beauty of our island and be in the position to attract more visitors to the CNMI," he said.

Dela Cruz urged the MVA managing director to expeditiously solicit the support of the agency's Board of Directors to hasten the approval of the said proposal.